

Message from the Women's Pre-Synod of Mission 21 "Arise, shine – for peace, justice ..."

Basel, 26 June 2019

The main burning issue agreed by the participants in the Women's Pre Synod of Mission 21 is **the vulnerability of women who don't have access to their basic rights.**

How is this experienced?

- **Through sexual and gender-based violence:** A common challenge experienced by women on all four continents is sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV). SGBV is grounded in social norms that tolerate, ignore or accept it implicitly. Furthermore, in many regions of the world, impunity exacerbates and perpetuates these situations.
Women faced with the challenge of limited economic prospects are often forced to migrate. This exposes them to several risks, among which is the threat of being trafficked, abused (molested, harassed, sexually violated, or physical hurt), or in several cases, being killed.
The risk factors increased by economic deprivation raise two critical concerns: First, ensuring that women KNOW their rights (so that they have access to justice and social protection). Secondly, challenging churches and communities to break the silence on femicide and other forms of violence against women.
- **Through structural barriers:** Women's access to decision-making spheres is often limited due to structural barriers (grounded in social norms and lack of policies). In some contexts, access to the ordained ministry is denied to women and even in countries where this possibility exists, women struggle to be treated in a fair way and remain subordinated to men's leadership. This situation cuts across regions, affecting women in Europe as well, where they still experience pay-gaps and are under-represented in leadership positions.

Churches and communities need to "walk the talk" in order to challenge issues of violence and gender-based discrimination within their own structures. We highly recommend to encourage the following strategies:

Education: Education is the access to our rights – or a requirement to even know about them. Increased accessibility and capacity building can lead to this goal.

Theological education and formation of the leadership: As examples, re reading the Bible with the eyes of the girls and women who are suffering.

Networks: Synergies among churches and organizations going beyond the traditional North-South cooperation prove valuable and inspirational.

Gender Policies and Codes of Conduct: Policies and codes of conduct offer guidance on how to prevent and address issues of violence and gender-based discrimination. Goodwill is not enough.

Build a Movement of Indignation: In light of feminicides, rampant violence and discrimination against women, it is necessary to build a movement that goes from silence to taking a position in the public space and lead to action. The silence of the churches strengthens the position of those who violate women's human rights.

Increase Advocacy Efforts: For the realization of our rights, we have to increase in a further step our advocacy efforts. Though we have done very much, it is still not sufficient.

So we call all delegates of the Mission 21 Synod: Increase your support as we strive for Gender Justice and **continue walking with us.**